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LABATT, Mary
*Witches' Brew: A
Sam & Friends
Mystery (Book 4)*

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Illustrated by Jo Rioux.
Kids Can Press, 2011. 96p.
Illus. Gr. 2-5. 978-1-55453-
472-7. Hdbk. \$16.95

The fourth book in the *Sam & Friends Mystery* graphic novel series follows sheepdog Sam, his ten-year-old owner Jennie, and her friend Beth as they investigate Jennie's new neighbours. Jennie can "hear" Sam's thoughts, and when three women with a bewildering array of pets - including toads that hop in a straight line - move in next door, Sam is convinced that the women must be witches. Spurred on by strange weather, weird potions, and disappearing pets, the threesome is determined to solve the mystery.

Sam is the source of most of the misunderstandings about the women. She believes she has been hexed and convinces the girls to search the house for a book of spells. At moments both humorous and suspenseful, this is an engaging, if slightly silly, story. The story's conclusion brings attention to neglected animals and those who help them.

The greyscale line drawings by Jo Rioux add to the mystery and suspense, especially the seemingly sinister portrayal of the male witch. Each page has at most three or four panels, and is accompanied by text that is large enough to be easily read. The mystery is suspenseful without being too scary and, combined with the relatively easy reading level, is ideally suited for younger readers.

Thematic Links: Mystery; Witches; Animal Neglect

Kristine Moruzi